8: Barlow E-4 (no date)1949 NU7 Aztec NU7

I. INTRODUCTION

Nature of the Present Study

The present paper is the first part of a study of the empire that Cortés invaded when he set foot at Vera Cruz in 1519. This is the empire wrongly called "Aztec"—a term which the writer has considered elsewhere[1] and for which he proposes to substitute the name "Culhua Mexica." This and a second paper, to be published later, deal with the geographical extent of the Empire of the Culhua Mexica and with its division into tributary provinces. All towns that can be proved to have been subject to the Valley of Mexico in 1519 will be dealt with in the two parts of this study of Culhua Mexica. Later and more detailed portions of the larger study consider this vast Empire chronologically: how and when it came to reach its final dimensions, who dominated it at the outset and who toward the end, and so forth. The present mapping of the Empire of the Culhua Mexica is a necessary preliminary to the historical studies (in the form of local histories) which are to follow, and which are the writer's chief aim.

Great exactness is possible in mapping the Empire (see map at end of book), because of one monumental document, the *Matricula de Tributos;* its bibliography is considered in the second section of this Introduction. It is the original native tribute list, in which the payment exacted from the provinces was recorded; it is the official bookkeeping ledger of the Empire, a hardheaded, realistic document. The *Matricula* is shaped like a book, in which hieroglyphs for various towns—ranging in number from two to nearly thirty—of a province are

[1] R. H. Barlow, "Some Remarks on the term 'Aztec Empire,'" *The Americas* (1945), 1: 344–349.

This empire was the product of a Triple Alliance among three tribes settled in the Valley of Mexico. These three tribes differed in religion, in customs, and doubtless in many other things. Their names were the Tepaneca, the Acolhuaque, and the Mexica. (The Mexica were subdivided into Tenochca and Tlatelolca.) The chief towns of each during the period of the Empire—roughly speaking, the century before the Spaniards came—were Tlacopan [Tacuba], Texcoco, and Mexico-Tenochtitlan (with Mexico-Tlatelolco active from 1428 to 1473). In 1519, the end of the native period, the Mexica of Tenochtitlan had quite overshadowed their allies, so that it is proper to call the Empire of the final period—which is the period of the present study—the Empire of the Mexica or Mexicans. But more exactly, it should be called the Empire of the Culhua Mexica, for reasons I have set forth in the above-cited paper. It is hopelessly erroneous to call it the Aztec Empire, for although the name Aztec was once applied to the Culhua Mexica, at the start of their history, they had discarded it long before founding their capital city.

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114 painted along the outer and lower margins of the page, the rest of the
128 page being taken up by the items of tribute for which these towns
211 were jointly responsible. The place names on a given page prove to
65 be geographically contiguous on modern maps, and so it is evident that the towns were regarded as a unit, as all having something in common. I have called each region thus indicated a "province," partly in order to provide some territorial division, but also because these groupings of towns were in some measure expressions of former political or linguistic units. Most of the Matlatzinca-speaking towns, for example, cluster on a page of their own; moreover, they were all conquered in a continuous campaign of a few years. These provinces (indicated on the map by large arabic numerals) I have named after the introductory glyphs, assuming the first glyph on each page to represent the most important town. Other available sources justify this. In another source, for instance, in the province I have named Tepequacuilco, Tepequacuilco is stated to be the "presidio de gente de guarnicion que cobravan los tributos: y recogieron de toda la cuisca [Cchuixca]";[8] in that which I have named Coayxtlahuacan, Coayxtlahuacan is called "donde el dicho Munteçuma tenia puesta su frontera de gente de guerra."[9] The borders of the provinces as they existed in 1519 have been commented on in detail where these were adjacent to non-Mexican lands.

Most of these invaluable place glyphs of the *Matricula* could be read even if they were all we had, and they are of course the final authorities. The task of reading them, however, is greatly simplified by the annotations they bear; the *Matricula* itself contains scattered and not always reliable identifications in roman letters, and the copy of the *Matricula* in the *Codex Mendocino* contains a complete series of highly reliable ones. In order to have some norm for spelling, I have everywhere followed these *Mendocino* versions. There are objections to this procedure—which gives us "Tuluca" for what is better rendered "Tolocan,"—but it shows how one Indian pronounced all the names of the Empire before the corrupting European influences set in.

[8] *Relación de Iguala* (1931), p. 223.

[9] *PNE*, 4: 165; 4: 198 agrees. Likewise, Tochpan (Tuchpa in *Mendocino*) has seven towns, and Ixtlilxochitl (*Obras históricas* [1892], II: 197) says that "La gran provincia de Tochpan se dividía en siete provincias." The fact that the initial glyph is often the only one identified in roman letters in the *Matricula* is also taken into account.